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ABSTRACT

The results of a national survey to determine the current status of statewide writing assessments are presented in this report. Various sections of the report provide (1) an explanation of terms commonly associated with writing assessment; (2) a brief account of the status of states' writing assessments; (3) individual summaries of administrative procedures, assessment objectives, sample items, scoring methods, and reporting procedures for each state that has conducted a writing assessment; (4) a list of writing objectives assessed by the various states; (5) a summary of the results of a questionnaire concerning scoring procedures, costs of assessment, problems encountered, and recommendations; and (6) a bibliography of sources used to gather information for the report. (FL)

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WRITING ASSESSMENT
RESEARCH REPORT:
A NATIONAL SURVEY

Prepared by

Vicki Fredrick

Wisconsin Pupil Assessment Program

May 1979

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Overview

In February of 1979, the Wisconsin Pupil Assessment Program conducted a survey of all state assessment programs. The purpose of the survey was to determine the current status of statewide writing assessments and to report these findings in an informational format which could be useful as a reference for others who might be planning a writing assessment.

This document includes an explanation of terms commonly associated with the assessment of writing; a brief account of the status of states' writing assessments; an individual summary of administration procedures, objectives, sample items, scoring methods, and reporting procedures for each state which has conducted a writing assessment; a list of writing objectives assessed by various states; a summary of the results of a questionnaire concerning scoring procedures, costs of assessment, problems encountered, and recommendations from states which have conducted writing assessments; and a bibliography of sources which are available for on-site reference.

The information presented in this publication was obtained from assessment reports, technical manuals, correspondence, and a questionnaire. The objectives and items used in this document as illustrative examples are intended merely to be representative of the wide range of instruments in use. Because the goals and purposes of writing assessments may vary, decisions concerning adaptation of existing objectives and items should be made only after carefully considering their applicability, usefulness, quality, and any restraints which may be involved in the items being reprinted.

Explanation of Terms

For those who are not already familiar with the language associated with assessment of writing, definitions of some of the most frequently used terms are presented here.

holistic scoring--a method of hand-scoring essays to determine their relative quality

The term is derived from this method's emphasis on a reader's response to the whole essay--how well the student communicates--rather than to such individual aspects of it as style, content, mechanics and so on. Readers are usually trained by rating papers exemplifying a range of score points until they rate papers consistently. They then read the essays, giving each a score, within a predetermined scale, based on their overall reaction to a paper as it compares to other papers.

machine scoring--a method of scoring multiple-choice tests; answer sheets are read and scored by computers

mechanics scoring--a method of hand-scoring essays to determine mechanical correctness and grammatical usage

In scoring the mechanics of writing, the scorer looks at such aspects of the essays as punctuation errors, agreement errors, spelling errors, capitalization errors, word-choice errors, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, etc., and tabulates the number of errors, usually in relation to the number of words written and/or the complexity of the writing.

primary-trait scoring--a method of hand-scoring essays to determine if the way in which they are written successfully accomplishes the main purpose of a specified writing task

The term is based on the assumption that particular writing tasks require particular approaches and no others if they are to be successful. The approach used by the writer to reach and affect his/her audience will be the most important--the primary--trait of a piece of writing. For example, the writer of a set of directions must present things in a logical and unambiguous manner if he/she expects readers to follow the directions. The primary trait of a written set of directions would be an unambiguous, sequential, and logical progression of instructions. Successful papers will have that trait; unsuccessful papers will not, regardless of how clever or well-written they may be in other respects.

secondary-trait scoring--a method of further analysis of essays which have been hand-scored according to primary-trait methodology

Secondary-trait scoring usually examines more closely the aspects considered in the primary trait required in a specific writing exercise. The secondary traits examined are often such things as appropriateness of sentence and paragraph construction and wording.

tertiary-trait scoring--a method of further analysis of essays which have been hand-scored according to primary-trait and secondary-trait methodology

Tertiary-trait scoring usually is a closer examination of the primary and secondary traits required in a specific writing exercise. The tertiary traits examined are often such things as spelling, punctuation, and other conventions of writing.

Status of State Writing Assessments

Response to the Survey

Thirty-eight states responded to the nationwide survey conducted by the Wisconsin Pupil Assessment Program in February of 1979. Of the 38 states which responded, 16 have conducted writing assessments of various types, 1 has conducted a pilot writing assessment, 1 will carry out a writing assessment during the 1979-80 school year, 4 are planning writing assessments, and 16 have not assessed writing.

Grades or Ages Tested

Most states that have implemented writing assessments have administered them according to grade levels. Only two states have administered tests according to ages of students. The age levels that were tested were 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, and 17-year-olds. These age levels were selected so that states could obtain regional and national data from NAEP*, which uses these age levels for its assessments. The grade levels tested ranged from 4th grade through 12th grade. The most frequently tested grade levels were 8th grade and 11th grade.

Types of Tests Administered

Of the 18 states involved in writing assessments, 10 used test instruments which asked only for writing samples from students, 1 used a totally multiple-choice test, and 8 used tests which were a combination of the two approaches--writing samples and multiple-choice.

Types of Scoring Procedures Used

All but one of the multiple-choice tests were machine-scored. That one exception was hand-scored by classroom teachers. Three methods were used to score writing samples: holistic scoring, primary-trait scoring, and teacher evaluation of proficiency. Holistic scoring was used by 5 states, primary-trait scoring was used by 8 states, and teacher evaluation of proficiency was used by 3 states. (Included in these figures are one state which scored secondary traits in addition to primary traits and one state which scored both secondary and tertiary traits in addition to primary traits.) No states have combined the holistic and the primary-trait scoring methods in assessing writing samples.

Survey Summary

The following is a state-by-state account of the preceding material concerning survey response, grades or ages tested, types of tests administered, and types of scoring procedures used.

*National Assessment of Educational Progress--funded by the U.S. Office of Education to gather and report information about levels of educational achievement across the country.

STATUS OF STATE WRITING ASSESSMENTS--FEBRUARY 1979 SUMMARY

STATE	RESPONSE	GRADE(S) OR AGE(S) TESTED	TYPE OF TEST	TYPE OF SCORING
Alabama	In planning stage			
Alaska	No			
Arizona				
Arkansas	No			
California	Yes	Grade 12	Writing samples	Holistic-- scale 1-9
Colorado	No			
Connecticut	No			
Delaware	In planning stage			
Florida				
Georgia				
Hawaii	Yes	Grades 4, 8, and 11	Writing samples	Primary, sec- ondary, and tertiary trait
Idaho	Yes	Grade 9	Writing samples	Holistic-- scale 1-5
Illinois	No			
Indiana				

STATE	RESPONSE	GRADE(S) OR AGE(S) TESTED	TYPE OF TEST	TYPE OF SCORING
Iowa				
Kansas	No			
Kentucky	No			
Louisiana	Yes (1979-80)		Multiple-choice Writing samples	Machine scoring Primary and secondary trait
Maine	Yes	Grades 8 & 11	Multiple-choice Writing samples	Machine scoring Primary trait
Maryland				
Massachusetts	Yes	9-year-olds 17-year-olds	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Holistic-- scale 1-8 Machine scoring
Michigan	Yes (pilot)	Grades 4 & 7	Writing samples	
Minnesota				
Mississippi				
Missouri	Yes	Grade 8	Writing samples	Teacher eval- uation of proficiency
Montana	No			
Nebraska	No			
Nevada				

STATE	RESPONSE	GRADE(S) OR AGE(S) TESTED	TYPE OF TEST	TYPE OF SCORING
New Hampshire	Yes	Grades 5 & 9	Writing samples	
New Jersey	In planning stage	Grade 9	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Holistic Machine scoring
New Mexico	Yes	Grades 10, 11, & 12	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Teacher eval- uation of proficiency Teacher eval- uation of proficiency
New York	Yes	Grades 11 & 12	Writing samples	Holistic
North Carolina	No			
North Dakota	No			
Ohio	Yes	Grade 8 (1977) Grade 12 (1978)	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Primary, & sec- ondary traits & mechanics. Machine scoring
Oklahoma	No			
Oregon	Yes	Grades 4, 7, & 11	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Holistic Machine scoring
Pennsylvania	Yes	Grades 5, 8, & 11	Multiple-choice	Machine scoring
Rhode Island	Yes	Grade 11	Writing samples	Primary trait

STATE	RESPONSE	GRADE(S) OR AGE(S) TESTED	TYPE OF TEST	TYPE OF SCORING
South Carolina				
Tennessee				
Texas	Yes	9-year-olds 13-year-olds 17-year-olds	Writing samples	Primary trait
Utah	No			
Vermont	Yes		Writing samples	Teacher eval- uation of proficiency
Virginia	No			
Washington	Yes	Grade 8 (1976) Grade 11 (1977)	Writing samples Multiple-choice	Primary trait Machine scoring
West Virginia				
Wisconsin	In planning stage			
Wyoming	No			

Summaries of Individual State Writing Assessments

States have used an interesting variety of approaches to the assessment of writing. Their differences and similarities are evident in the summaries presented in this document.

Of the 16 state assessments that have been conducted as of this time, 15 are summarized in the following pages. (The one state which is not included is New Hampshire, which has not yet published a report of its recently completed assessment.) Also included are summaries of Michigan's pilot test and Louisiana's assessment scheduled for the 1979-80 school year.

Each summary consists of such aspects of assessment as administration procedures, objectives measured, samples of actual items used, scoring methods, and procedures used for reporting scores.

* * * * *

California Writing Assessment

Introduction

During 1975, the California State Department of Education conducted an assessment of the writing performance of California students in grade twelve. More than 4,000 high school seniors in 28 schools were randomly assigned one of five topics:

1. Describe a favorite object. (40 minute limit)
2. Give directions on how to do or make something. (40 minute limit)
3. Compose a letter describing a pictured event. (40 minute limit)
4. Discuss an invention that mankind would be better off without. (40 minute limit)
5. Describe, from a diagram, an automobile accident. (40 minute limit)

Example of Writing Item

Directions for student:

Not all inventions have been good for all mankind. Name one invention we would be better off without. Discuss why we would be better off as a civilization without that invention.

Scoring Procedure

The holistic scoring method was used to rate the essays. All essays received two independent ratings, and significant discrepancies between ratings were reconciled by the judges or by a third party if necessary. The two ratings were then combined for a total score.

To score responses to the example item given above, judges were given the following instructions:

Score for Composition

Use a scale of 1-9, but use even points primarily. The first decision is whether the paper is in the upper half or lower half of the papers written for this topic. Should the paper be rated 2, 4, 6, or 8? Then refine your scoring, using odd numbers to reward things which stand out — language use, freshness, crispness — or to lower the score of a paper which was a struggle to read.

Papers are given two readings, and the scores from the two readings are added together. A paper can receive a final score of 2-18. Only a blank paper will receive a zero.

Papers with scores more than two numbers apart are given a third reading by the table leader.

The reader should keep in mind that he or she is not looking for errors to correct; rather, the reader is rewarding the writer for what he or she does well in response to the topic. The word invention should not be defined too narrowly; an invention can be an idea or theory as well as a tangible object. Some papers will be developed primarily by factual evidence; others, by a series of reasons. Both kinds of development ought to be considered equally valid responses. Clear presentation of ideas, evidence, and experience ought to be rewarded, even when reasoning seems mediocre, thin, or fallacious in part. The writer should be rewarded for his or her handling of the question; and the score should not be raised or lowered because the reader approves or disapproves of values expressed. The reader should be as alert as possible to any indirect connection to the writing since the quality of writing is being judged, not the reading of the directions for the topic.

Score for Competency in English

The reader judges the writer's overall skills in punctuation, diction and usage, and sentence sense. Scores are assigned according to the following broad descriptions:

- 5 Outstanding; varied, mature sentences, with strong diction and almost no errors; notable in use of subordination and free of modifiers.
- 4 Above-average sentence sense; few errors in usage or punctuation (and none of them major); perhaps some hint of a sense of style.
- 3 About average for the papers scored; many short sentences, perhaps with some comma faults and an occasional fragment; but overall, a suggestion that the student has a fair grasp of sentence sense.
- 2 A cluster of errors in grammar, usage, and punctuation, or a paper which has a dead-level simplicity and monotony of style; practically no sentence without an error of some kind; but in spite of these problems, generally readable.

A paper so badly marred with problems that the reader can hardly follow the ideas presented, either because of stumbling syntax (mixed structures and the like) or because of word choices and such egregious form problems (including spelling) that the reader finds it difficult to be sympathetic with the writer.

Note: Matters of spelling are intentionally not specified in the descriptions of papers rated 5, 4, 3, and 2. The reader should ignore spelling except for the 1 paper. This category allows for the paper with so many misspelled words that the reader must actually struggle to follow the thread of thought. Such a paper suggests a degree of near illiteracy.

Appraisal of Strengths and Weaknesses

To obtain some diagnostic information, a representative sample of essays was reread to determine common strengths and weaknesses. The sample was selected by separating the essays for each topic into three groups--approximately the top quarter, the middle half, and the lower quarter--on the basis of the combined holistic scores. Fifty essays were then randomly selected from each group for each essay so that 150 essays per topic, or 750 in all, were selected.

Twelve of the judges who had participated in the earlier scoring appraised the 750 essays for common strengths and weaknesses as defined by the following checklist:

Checklist for Dimensions in Writing

Check the following categories as a strength or weakness only if you can say yes in the following test question frames:

Strength: Did the student's demonstrated performance in _____ contribute to his or her ability to communicate effectively in this essay? If yes, then check as a strength.

Weakness: Did the student's demonstrated performance in _____ detract from his or her ability to communicate effectively in this essay? If yes, then check as a weakness.

I. Competencies	Strength	Weakness
A. Vocabulary (precision, specificity, freshness, originality)	_____	_____
B. Sentence sense (coherence within and between sentences; subordination, coordination, parallelism; avoidance of wordy, redundant, and awkward phrasing; avoidance of ineffective run-ons and fragments)	_____	_____
C. Paragraph Development (coherence within and between paragraphs; effective transitions; consistency of tense, person, point of view)	_____	_____
D. Usage (verb forms, pronoun reference, subject-verb agreement, inflectional and derivational endings)	_____	_____
E. Capitalization	_____	_____

	Strength	Weakness
F. Punctuation	_____	_____
G. Spelling	_____	_____
Other:		
H.	_____	_____
I.	_____	_____
J.	_____	_____
II. Content		
A. Appropriate response to directions	_____	_____
B. Ideas and insights	_____	_____
C. Reasoning, support, development	_____	_____
D. Ingenuity, creativity, originality	_____	_____
E. Observation and description	_____	_____
F. Tone, style	_____	_____
Other:		
G.	_____	_____
H.	_____	_____
I.	_____	_____
J.	_____	_____

Reporting Results

Results for the holistic scoring of the essays were reported as number of essays per score and percent of essays per score. Also, correlations between essay scores and scores on the written expression section of the Survey of Basic Skills: Grade 12, which consists of multiple-choice items testing linguistic skills considered fundamental to the writing process, were calculated.

Some information which was considered in analyzing the data were sex of student; enrollment of students in English, speech or composition courses; and whether students wrote such things as letters, poems, stories, newspaper articles, etc.

Hawaii Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Hawaii writing assessment will be administered to a sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in early May of 1979. The tests were developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon, and a committee of University of Hawaii and Department of Education specialists. The NAEP staff provided guidance, particularly on the scoring process. Four objectives were measured at all three grade levels:

1. Expressing Feelings: To express personal feelings clearly and vividly.
2. Giving Information: To give clear, accurate, and complete information to others.
3. Promoting Ideas: To present a convincing argument.
4. Entertaining: To use language artfully to move the reader into the imaginary world of the writer.

The following are two examples of writing items being used by the Hawaii assessment program. The responses will be scored according to the primary trait methodology and will also include scoring of secondary and tertiary traits. Scoring criteria for each trait are presented with the items.

Objective 1: Expressing Feelings:

EXAMPLE A.

Grade 4 exercise --

It is announced that, beginning tomorrow, school will begin an hour earlier and end an hour later everyday. Write down exactly how you feel about this.

The primary trait for this exercise is expressing personal feelings clearly and vividly. The responses will be scored at four levels of quality:

1. Primary trait absent -- Little indication of a real personality. Many inconsistencies and contradictions. No real "voice" is established. Vocabulary is dull and lifeless, or reliance on clichés is nearly total. Some papers may resort to lists of opinions or reasons.
2. Primary trait present -- Reveals a personality, but there are inconsistencies and contradictions that detract from its effectiveness. Expression of feeling is limited. Some words may be used inaccurately, or there may be reliance on clichés or trite expressions.
3. Primary trait adequate -- Writing has a personal style, but contains minor inconsistencies and contradictions. Clear expression of feelings, but lacks freshness and originality. Word choice is accurate, but words are not vivid, lively or colorful.

4. Primary trait excellent -- Writing has a personal style. Reveals a personality that is clear, consistent, and believable. Strong, clear expression of feeling and openness. Fresh, original ideas. Words are vivid, colorful, and effective, and enhance the expressiveness of the paper.

The secondary trait for this exercise is proper use of syntax. The responses will be scored according to the following levels of quality:

1. Secondary trait absent -- Shows little or no sense of sentence structure.
2. Secondary trait present -- Many sentences have structural weaknesses and grammatical errors.
3. Secondary trait adequate -- Sentence structure generally correct. Some awkwardness, but does not detract from overall effectiveness.
4. Secondary trait excellent -- Words and phrases combined effectively into permitted and appropriate language.

The tertiary trait for this exercise is proper use of punctuation, capitalization, and other conventions. The responses will be scored according to these four levels of quality:

1. Tertiary trait absent -- So many errors that paper is difficult to read.
2. Tertiary trait present -- Several errors that detract from overall effectiveness of writing.
3. Tertiary trait adequate -- A few errors, but they do not detract from overall effectiveness.
4. Tertiary trait excellent -- No errors.

Objective 3: Promoting Ideas:

EXAMPLE B.

Grades 8 and 11 exercise --

The Department of Education is considering a rule that would extend the school year to eleven months and shorten the summer vacation to one month. The decision will be made by a vote of students. Decide whether you agree or disagree with the proposed rule. Then write your reasons for your view. Make your argument strong enough to convince your friends and classmates to vote the way you want them to.

The primary traits required by this assignment are a clearly stated position, good use of supporting information, establishing tone, and organization of ideas. Scoring of responses to this item will be as follows:

Clearly stated position:

1. Primary trait absent -- Statement of position is missing or so unclear that it cannot be determined.
2. Primary trait present -- Point of view reasonably established, but has some ambiguities, inconsistencies, or shifts in position.

3. Primary trait adequate -- Position clearly stated and consistently maintained. Clear references to specific issue are missing.
4. Primary trait excellent -- Position clearly stated and consistently maintained. Specific and complete reference to all important components of the issue.

Use of supporting information:

1. Primary trait absent -- Evidence is nonexistent, extremely limited, vague, or unrelated to argument.
2. Primary trait present -- Argument supported by limited evidence. Some details only loosely related.
3. Primary trait adequate -- Supportive but insufficient evidence. Some details only loosely related.
4. Primary trait excellent -- Specific and convincing evidence. Supported by sufficient examples, experiences, or other evidence.

Tone:

1. Primary trait absent -- Tone inappropriate to audience, purpose, and occasion, and is counterproductive.
2. Primary trait present -- Tone does not contribute, but is not counterproductive. Flat, dull, uninteresting, or difficult to discern.
3. Primary trait adequate -- Appropriate for audience and purpose. Enhances persuasiveness, but shows inconsistencies.
4. Primary trait excellent -- Consistent and appropriate for purpose and audience. Enhances persuasiveness.

Organization:

1. Primary trait absent -- No apparent structure.
2. Primary trait present -- Some attempt to structure. Poorly developed transitions, paragraphing, and other organizational devices.
3. Primary trait adequate -- Reasonably developed structure. Minor deviations that do not seriously detract from clarity.
4. Primary trait excellent -- Clearly developed structure. Clear transitions enhanced by appropriate paragraphing.

The secondary trait required by this assignment is accurate, precise wording. Scoring will be as follows:

1. Secondary trait absent -- Words are inaccurate or imprecise.
2. Secondary trait present -- Some words are inaccurate or imprecise.
3. Secondary trait adequate -- Few words are weak or misused but do not detract from effectiveness of argument.
4. Secondary trait excellent -- Words are clear, accurate, and precise.

The tertiary traits required by this item are proper use of syntax, correct spelling, and correct use of punctuation, capitalization, and other conventions. The evaluation criteria for syntax and punctuation, capitalization, and other conventions has been previously described (see Example A). The scoring for spelling will be as follows:

Spelling:

1. Tertiary trait absent -- So many spelling errors that writing is difficult to understand.
2. Tertiary trait present -- Several spelling errors that detract from effectiveness.
3. Tertiary trait adequate -- A few spelling errors that do not detract from effectiveness.
4. Tertiary trait excellent -- No errors or only a few in difficult words.

To score the writing samples, four teams of three members each will be used, one team for each grade level: 4, 8, and 11. Two team members will read and score each exercise. The third team member will act as judge and final arbitrator of any substantial differences.

Idaho Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Idaho Writing Assessment is part of the statewide Proficiency Testing Program. The program is in its development stages. Field testing was completed in October 1978 and the first statewide testing is scheduled for April 1979. The program is on a district-optional basis.

The test will be given to all ninth graders and will cover basic skills in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. The test is being given to certify a student's competency in those basic skills areas and to identify any areas of weakness or deficiency that need to be strengthened prior to the student's graduation.

Students who pass all four sections of the test will be recognized by the placing of a State Board of Education Seal on their diploma. Those students who fail to obtain satisfactory scores in any of the four areas will be provided additional help to enable them to bring their scores up to a satisfactory level before graduation. Students who fail any portion of the test will have the opportunity to retake the test twice a year, until such time as the results are deemed satisfactory.

Writing Assessment Objectives

The Writing Assessment will call for an actual writing sample. The task given students will simulate a real life situation... for example, composing a letter, applying for a summer job. The test will cover these writing objectives:

1. The student will organize material by:
 - a. choosing a position
 - b. maintaining a position
 - c. providing information (evidence, reasons, facts, examples, proofs, experiences)
 - d. reaching a conclusion
2. The student should be able to meet the specific demands of a writing task by:
 - a. using appropriate vocabulary
 - b. following directions of the assignment
 - c. observing the format required
3. The student will use the mechanics of written English by:
 - a. punctuating appropriately (including capitalization and indentation)
 - b. writing complete and correct sentences
 - c. writing legibly
 - d. spelling correctly

Scoring The Writing Samples

A team experienced in language arts instruction will be trained in the holistic scoring procedure by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in April 1979. Papers will be scored holistically using a 5-point scale. Each paper will be read by two scorers, with a third available to resolve discrepancies.

Louisiana Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Louisiana Department of Education will conduct a statewide writing assessment for the first time in the school year 1979-80. The assessment will consist of objective type items in writing and actual writing samples. The primary and secondary trait scoring methods will be used.

Minimum Standards for Writing

In addition to the planned writing assessment, Louisiana has developed minimum standards for writing in grades K-12. The skills are organized under two major domains. In the first domain, Types and Forms of Writing, skills are grouped according to the writer's purpose -- Description, Narration, Exposition, and Persuasion. In the second domain, Writing Skills, the grouping follows as closely as possible the order in which the particular skills are introduced in the classroom -- Handwriting, Spelling, Capitalization, Punctuation, Language Structure, Organization, and Proofreading.

Maine Writing Assessment

Introduction

During 1977-78, Maine implemented a statewide assessment of 8th and 11th grade student's performance in basic skills. The Assessment of Basic Skills included a writing assessment, a Benchmark Study to provide a framework for interpreting assessment results, and a Diploma Survey which gathered information on public opinion concerning competency requirements for students.

The writing assessment used an objective and items developed by NAEP. The objective tested was: Demonstrates the ability to write in a social and business context. Four multiple-choice items required students to select the best set of written passages given a specified purpose. Additionally, three open-ended writing items required students to (1) fill out an application blank, (2) write a letter ordering something in the mail, and (3) describe a traffic accident in their own words based on a diagram of the accident. These items were scored according to primary trait methodology using NAEP criteria.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

The following example item was used to assess both 8th and 11th grade students:

Looking for a special gift for that SPECIAL someone?



We can provide you with a pair of fascinating sea horses for less than you will pay elsewhere. Send only \$3. We guarantee live delivery and include free food and instructions.

Gulf Suppliers, Inc, Box 79,
Seaside, Florida 33000

Someone who lives at 320 Random Road in Port Huron, Michigan 48121, has decided to buy a pair of seahorses. On the opposite page, write a letter that he (or she) can send to order them.

Responses to this item must include both of the following:

- (1) the product wanted--a pair of seahorses
- (2) the sender's address; the zip code is not necessary, nor the name of the sender.

Assessment Through Use of Multiple-Choice Items

The following example item was used to assess both 8th and 11th grade students:

Below are three pieces of writing that all say essentially the same thing. However, one says it with more force and greater clarity than the other two. Choose the piece of writing you think would be the MOST appropriate to submit as a want ad. Mark your choice on your answer sheet.

- A. We have the kittens, you have the home, let's get together. They are free to anyone calling 785-2345 after 6:00 p.m. They love children and children will love them.
- B. I must separate from five adorable kittens, mixed colors weaned, sandbox trained, love children. Free to anyone promising a lovely home. Call 785-2345 after 6:00 p.m.
- C. Free kittens not for sale, but free to good home. Just what your child needs, we have them for you at once. Any evening call 785-2345.

The multiple-choice items were machine scored and results were reported as percent of correct responses for each grade level.

Reporting Results

Results for the writing assessment were reported for each item, showing comparisons with previous assessments, national percentages, and north eastern region percentages. Also, results were shown in relationship to size of school and sex of student.

Benchmark Study

A component of the Assessment of Basic Skills was the implementation of a Benchmark Study. A sample of 300 high school teachers in each subject area (reading, mathematics, and writing) participated in the survey. They received each test item in their subject area and made two judgments: (1) the percentage of Maine Seventh-grade students they expected to answer the item correctly and (2) the validity of the item as a measure of a basic skill.

The results of this teacher survey were tabulated and presented to a group of content specialists serving on a Benchmark Panel. The panel members' task was to reach a consensus about the two judgments mentioned above. Consensus was defined as two-thirds agreement of panel members.

The observed grade 11 performance for each item was presented in relationship to the predicted performance as determined by the survey and the panel and in relationship to the validity of the item as a measure of a basic skill.

Massachusetts Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Massachusetts writing assessment was administered in the 1975-76 school year to a representative sample of 9-year-olds and 17-year-olds. The assessment included three objectives covered by NAEP exercises: (1) write to communicate adequately in a social situation, (2) write to communicate adequately in a business or vocational situation, and (3) write to communicate adequately in a scholastic situation. Another objective, not specifically covered by NAEP, was also included--writing mechanics. Writing samples were used to assess all four objectives. Also, to assess writing mechanics, multiple-choice items and spelling lists were used.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

The following are examples of items used to assess each age group on the three NAEP objectives.

1. Write to communicate adequately in a social situation.

EXAMPLE A, (NAEP ITEM)

An example of an item for 9-year-olds:

You are going to hear two people talking on the telephone. One is a girl named Mary Brown. The other is someone just about your age. His name is Billy. Pretend that YOU are Billy, and LISTEN CAREFULLY to what Mary asks Billy to do.

(NOW LISTEN TO THE PHONE CONVERSATION.)

(Students then listened to the conversation reproduced below.

It was not printed in their test booklets.)

BILLY: Hello.

MARY: Hello, who is this?

BILLY: This is Billy.

MARY: Billy, this is Mary Brown. Is your sister there?

BILLY: No, she's at the store.

MARY: Will you give her a message for me?

BILLY: Sure, I guess so. What is it?

MARY: This is pretty important, Billy. Can you get some pencil and paper and write it down?

BILLY: O.K. Wait a minute. (Pause.) I'm ready now. Go ahead.

MARY: Tell your sister that I'll meet her at Jane's house at 6 o'clock tonight. Got it?

BILLY: No, don't go so fast. Say it again.

MARY: Tell her to meet Mary Brown at Jane's house at 6 o'clock tonight. Got it now?

BILLY: I think so, let me see. Meet Mary Brown at Jane's house at 6 o'clock tonight.

MARY: That's right, Billy, don't forget now. Goodbye.

Mary asked Billy to write a note, didn't she? Now, you will hear them again. Pretend that you are Billy again. Listen carefully, and this time try to write the note that Mary asked Billy to write.

(NOW LISTEN TO THE PHONE CONVERSATION AGAIN.)

(About one half page of lined space was provided for the response.)

Responses to this exercise were scored as acceptable or not acceptable according to these criteria:

Acceptable: The response had to:

1. be in note form
2. include the following information:
 - a. meet Mary or meet Mary Brown
 - b. where: Jane's house
 - c. time: 6:00
 - d. day: tonight

Not Acceptable: Omission or error in any of the above pieces of information, or failure to write in note form. Copying the instructions or stating, for example, "Tell your sister to meet Mary..." is not in note form and therefore unacceptable.

2. Write to communicate adequately in a business or vocational situation.

EXAMPLE B. (NAEP ITEM)

An example of an item for 17-year-olds:

Below is a sample application blank. Ones like it are used to get information from people who are applying for driving licenses, credit cards, passports, and other identification cards. Please print the information requested.

Do not use your own name. For this application blank, each boy should call himself Adam Baker Carson. Each girl should call herself Alice Baker Carson. You may make up the rest of the information.

1.	_____	_____	_____
	last	first	middle initial
2.	_____		
	street address		
3.	_____		
	city or town	county	state zip code
4. DATE OF BIRTH:	_____	5. SEX:	_____
	month day year		M or F
6. HT:	_____	WT:	_____
		HAIR:	_____
		EYES:	_____
TODAY'S DATE:	_____		

Responses to this exercise were scored as acceptable or not acceptable according to these criteria:

Acceptable: Every blank has to be filled in with appropriate information. The following was required:

1. The first three lines had to be printed.
2. Name: Carson, Alice B., or Carson, Adam B.
3. Order of name: This was scored as correct if written in the order as given in item #2, regardless of whether the name itself was correctly written (for example, if the middle name instead of the middle initial was written in the space for middle initial, the order was correct even though the name is not correct.)
4. Street Address, or RR or RFD with number, or Box with number.
5. City or Town
6. County: Unacceptable if a country was named.
7. State: had to be one of the fifty states.
8. Zip code: had to be a five-digit number.
9. Date of birth: a month or a number from 1 to 12; day; and year. (Day had to be a number 1-29, 30, or 31; any year acceptable).
10. Order of date of birth: scored as correct if the order was correct, regardless of whether or not the information itself was scored as correct.
11. Sex: M or F, or Male or Female

12. Ht.
 13. Wt.
 14. Hair
 15. Eyes
- } Liberal allowance was given for "funny" responses, as Ht: 2 feet; or Hair: green. However, the information had to be a possible number or adjective.
16. Today's date: Had to have month, day and year. If day of the week was also given, the line was acceptable.

Not Acceptable: Error in any part of the application (such as writing a day of the week in the "date of birth" blank), or failing to fill in a blank.

3. Write to communicate adequately in a scholastic situation.

Description of Exercises

Performance on this objective was measured through essay exercises at both age levels. Nine-year-old students wrote two essays; in the first essay they were asked to tell what they do or what they see during the time they leave their homes until the time they arrive at school. For the second essay the students were given a color photograph of a forest fire and were asked to describe what was happening in the picture. For this essay, students were asked to write their descriptions, to make any substantive, rather than cosmetic, revisions necessary to improve what they had written, and then to make a good copy of their descriptions. Seventeen-year-old students wrote only one essay, in which they had to identify at least two forces affecting their choices of what they would like to do in the years ahead and to discuss the way these forces influence their decision-making. One-half of the students wrote their essays directly, without making a first draft. The other half of the students were asked to write a first draft and then to rewrite it in final, improved form. Thus, at both age levels, samples of "direct write" and "rewrite" were obtained.

Scoring Procedure

Essays were scored holistically; that is, they were given a score on a scale of one through eight (a score of one being the lowest and eight being the highest) based on their overall quality according to NAEP criteria, rather than on individual aspects such as style or content. The scoring task was performed by a group of sixty-nine Massachusetts English teachers and department heads. Each essay was read by two scorers; room leaders identified discrepancies of greater than two points between ratings; and by consensus of the two scorers or arbitration by a third reader, final ratings were always resolved to within two points of each other. Scores were reported as the sum of the ratings, given by the two independent readers, producing a scale of two through sixteen.

4. Demonstrate good spelling and writing mechanics.

Students were tested on these skills through exercises developed in Massachusetts. In one exercise, students were asked to circle the appropriate word(s) in sentences to make the sentences correct in terms

of agreement, punctuation, word choice, capitalization, spelling, and/or sentence construction. In a separate exercise, students were asked to spell ten words which were dictated to them.

Spelling List
Nine-Year-Olds

Massachusetts
dollar
believe
people
thought
sign
money
quiet
exhibit
science

Spelling List
Seventeen-Year-Olds

Massachusetts
calculator
senator
receipt
procedure
atmosphere
piece
thorough
bicentennial
vehicle

In addition, spelling and mechanical errors were considered in scoring the essays written in response to the third objective. Results were reported as average number of errors per 100 words for each error category: paragraph, sentence fragment, run-on sentence, punctuation, agreement, awkward construction, word choice, spelling, capitalization, and illegible word.

Reporting Scores

For those items used in the Massachusetts assessment which were NAEP items, scores were reported in comparison to national percentages and northeast regional percentages. Scores were also considered in relation to educational region within Massachusetts to which the students belonged and kind of community in which their school was located.

Other variables considered in reporting scores were sex, mother's education, father's education, occupation of head of household, type of high school program, future plans, attitude toward school, and friendliness of school.

Michigan Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Michigan Department of Education has been in the process of developing writing assessment materials. In the fall of 1978, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program administered writing tests on a statewide pilot basis. The scoring contractor (Westinghouse Learning Corporation) has determined the test items are not scorable using primary trait scoring methodology. Examples of items used to assess performance of fourth grade and seventh grade students are included in this summary.

Examples of Writing Assessment Items

The following is an example of an item from the fourth grade Experimental Writing Test:

Directions: Read each topic to yourself carefully. Choose one topic that you would like to write about.

1. Suppose that you are moving to California. You can take only three things with you. The movers will store the rest of your belongings, and in a month they will bring them to your house. Tell what three things you would take with you and why you would take them.
2. Pretend that you have a secret room in your house. Only you have a key that will open the door to this hidden spot. Describe the room, and tell what things are in it.

I am going to write about topic number ().

(5-½ pages were provided for writing response)

An example of an item from the seventh grade Experimental Writing Test follows:

Directions: Read each topic to yourself carefully. Choose one topic that you would like to write about.

1. Suppose that a nearby zoo allowed your class to borrow an animal for a day. That evening there is a story on the television about your school. Tell what animal visited and what happened that was so newsworthy.
2. Suppose your uncle, a famous scientist, offers you a choice of two potions, the effects of which will last for one day. One will make you invisible, and the other will give you bionic powers. Tell which potion you chose and what you did during the twenty-four hours.

3. Pretend that you have a secret room in your house. Only you have a key that will open the door to this hidden spot. Describe the room, and tell what things are in it.
4. Suppose you win first prize in a television contest. You can spend the entire day at the home of any television, movie or recording star. Tell whom you would choose, what their home might be like and some of the things you would do.

I am going to write about topic number ().

(5-1/2 pages were provided for writing response)

Because these items were not scorable by the primary trait method, Michigan is considering the use of NAEP's third assessment items to once again conduct a statewide pilot during the 1979-80 school year.

Missouri Writing Assessment

Introduction

All public school districts in Missouri must administer the Basic Essential Skills Test (BEST) to eighth grade students each year, beginning in the spring of 1979. The purpose of administering the test to eighth graders is to identify students who may be having difficulty with basic skills while there is still time to assist these students in problem areas.

The BEST assesses student performance in reading/language arts, math, and government/economics. This summary will be concerned only with a portion of the reading/language arts section which deals directly with the assessment of writing skills. Although most of the objectives of the BEST will be assessed by a multiple-choice test, writing skills is one area which will be assessed at the local level by teacher observance of pupil performance.

Writing Skills Objectives

Included in the BEST are two objectives which assess writing skills:

Objective 15 The student will demonstrate the ability to write with complete sentences, acceptable sentence structure, acceptable grammatical construction, and correct spelling and punctuation.

Some criteria that may be used for evaluating student performance are as follows:

1. uses legible handwriting
2. uses correct spelling
3. punctuates correctly
4. writes a good sentence
5. writes a good paragraph

Objective 18 The student will demonstrate the ability to complete a business form correctly and neatly.

Some criteria that may be used for evaluating satisfactory student performance are as follows:

1. uses legible handwriting
2. follows directions as given on a form (e.g., prints in capital letters if so directed)
3. puts required information in correct space
4. supplies all requested information

Reporting Student Performance

A format that may be used by local schools for recording satisfactory student performance is provided below. This is only a suggested format and the local school will be responsible for developing and distributing the form to be used.

The teacher's evaluation of "satisfactory" should be shown by placing a date and initials on the form. Suggested criteria for evaluating "satisfactory" student performance on these objectives are provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These are only suggested criteria and school districts may choose to develop their own criteria.

**Record of Satisfactory Student Performance
On BEST Objectives Tested Locally**

Student's Name	Teacher Evaluation	Reading/Language Arts Objectives								Math	
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15
	Date										
	Initial										
	Date										
	Initial										
	Date										
	Initial										

The checking for "satisfactory" pupil performance on locally tested objectives can be done any time during the year, but must be done prior to the time the student takes the statewide BEST. In most cases, a teacher can evaluate a pupil's performance on these objectives early in the school year and, certainly, by the end of the first semester. Those pupils needing additional help in reaching satisfactory performance should receive instruction in those areas during the school year and be rechecked when appropriate.

New Mexico Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Writing Skills Appraisal is a portion of the High School Proficiency Examination required by the New Mexico Basic Skills Plan. In developing the Basic Skills Plan, the Superintendent's Basic Skills Task Force indicated the need to insure that students possess sufficient skills to perform adequately on tasks they will probably encounter as adults. These tasks include such things as properly completing applications and forms, writing letters, and expressing ideas. Student performance on several of these tasks can be adequately tested with multiple choice items such as those found on the Adult Performance Level (APL) test. Performance on many such tasks, however, cannot be adequately measured without asking students to actually produce writing.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

Each local school district is responsible for administering the Writing Skills Appraisal to its students. The four tasks which will be appraised are: (1) abbreviated message, (2) business letter, (3) description, and (4) compare/contrast. For determination of successful completion of each task, several skills will be considered. The accompanying chart outlines the skills considered for each task.

S K I L L S	TASKS			
	1 Abbrev. Message	2 Business Letter	3 Descrip- tion	4 Compare/ Contrast
1. Legibility				
2. Spelling (Syllabication and Abbreviations)				
3. Language Mechanics				
4. Appropriate Language				
5. Sentence Construction				
6. Paragraph Construction				
7. Cohesiveness and Transition		*	*	
8. Appropriate Organization				
8. a. Letter Format				
8. B. Ordering				

*optional consideration
for these tasks

The following are examples of how selected tasks may be worded. These examples attempt to show the types of information which should be provided the students for completing the tasks. The actual manner in which the tasks are stated will be determined by each school district.

EXAMPLE A

Task 1 (abbreviated message) could be stated:

Your family just bought a new stereo. You have an old record player which still works well. You would like to receive a little money for it and none of your friends want to buy it. From the following information, develop an ad you could place in the classified ad section of a newspaper:

The record player is an eight-year-old True Sound Portable. It has three speeds - 33 1/3, 45, and 78 rpm - and an automatic changer. The two speakers can be separated from the cabinet and placed up to 20 feet apart. You never experienced any trouble with the record player and just recently bought a new needle. The machine cost \$85.00 new, but because of its age, you feel \$15.00 is fair asking price.

The local paper charges \$.12 per word for a classified ad and you do not want to spend more than \$2.00.

Your ad will be judged on the completeness of the information you are able to include in this brief form. This means that you must attempt to sell the record player with your description. Your work will also be judged on the accuracy of your spelling, capitalization, word use, and abbreviations, if any.

EXAMPLE B

Task 3 (description):

A task such as the following requires students to draw upon the career education information available in the school program. This should be made known to the student. This task could be stated:

Choose a career you would like to have as an adult. Describe in 300 words or less (about 3 handwritten pages), what you think are the benefits of this job and what will be required to qualify for that job. Benefits and disadvantages would come under such categories as salary, working hours and conditions, personal satisfaction, extra benefits like insurance or retirement, and the social prestige of the job. You should explain what types of training and experiences you need to gain before you apply and what type of education, degrees or licenses will be necessary.

Your description will be judged on the completeness of the information you include, paragraph and sentence construction, organization, and clarity. The paper will also be judged on the accuracy of your spelling, capitalization, punctuation and word usage.

Individual school districts are responsible for verification of students proficiency. Districts may use any one of several types of verification procedures. Some of these procedures may be cumulative in nature and verify proficiencies on different tasks over a period of time. Other procedures may involve setting aside a particular testing period. Depending on which procedure a district chooses to follow, writing samples may be scored by teachers, or a specified scorer or group of scorers. Regardless of what verification method a district uses, a student must receive final verification as having passed or not passed the Writing Skills Appraisal by the reporting date of that student's senior year. This will be noted on the student's transcript. The first reporting date for the Class of 1981 will be February 1, 1980. The writing appraisal and APL are mandatory beginning with the Class of 1981. Students who perform successfully on both will receive a state "proficiency endorsement" on their diplomas.

New York Writing Assessment

Introduction

The New York State Education Department and the Board of Regents have established a writing competency testing program that has two purposes: (1) to assure the early identification of students who need special help, and (2) to assure that students have acquired an adequate competence before receiving a high school diploma.

Early identification of writing deficiencies is accomplished by local schools through the use of formal and informal measures of achievement that are part of the schools' regular instructional programs. One checkpoint, provided by the statewide testing program, that can be incorporated into the schools' systems is the preliminary competency test for grade 8 or 9.

To determine proficiency for graduation, the Regents competency test will be administered in grades 11 and 12. Beginning June 1, 1981, no student may receive a high school diploma without demonstrating competence in writing (as well as reading comprehension and mathematics) by obtaining passing marks on the Regents competency tests or on the Regents high school examination in English.* This summary will be concerned only with the Regents Competency Test in Writing.

Description of the test

The Regents Competency Test in Writing is designed to measure a student's ability to organize and develop ideas in written form at an acceptable level of proficiency in language skills which include sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage.

The test consists of three types of writing tasks. The specific writing tasks for each test are drawn from an established list of topics for each type of task.

The student is required to write each of the following:

1. A business letter registering a complaint and requesting corrective action. Possible topics for the business letter may involve situations such as: (1) failure to receive a camera ordered by mail, (2) refusal of a store to refund money for a defective toaster, (3) inadequate recreational facilities for young people in the neighborhood.
2. A report based upon data supplied. Possible topics for the report may include: (1) an account of a sporting event, (2) an interview with a faculty member, (3) an analysis of a product for young people.

*The standard for minimum competency has not been finally determined at this time. Participants at the 1978-79 Regents Regional Conferences, members of the Commissioner's and Regents Advisory Councils, and members of statewide professional and lay organizations will contribute to the setting of the standard.

3. A statement of about 200 words that will persuade a specific audience. Possible topics for this statement may include writing to: (1) the board of education to recommend that a subject be added to the curriculum, (2) a member of the State Senate or Assembly to recommend specific legislation favoring young people, (3) the president of the local automobile association to ask the association to sponsor a young people's Drive-a-Rama.

In the rating of answers for the Regents Competency Test in Writing, the technique of holistic scoring will be used. This means that each answer will be rated on the basis of its total effect and overall quality with respect to both content and expression. Each of the three answers for each student will be rated by a different person. Thus, the total score for a student on the Regents Competency Test in Writing will be a composite of three raters' judgments.

The following is an example of a question for the third writing task:

Your community is considering a proposal to ban driving by teenagers after dark. Write a letter, of about 200 words, to the mayor or other official in your community. In your letter, defend or attack the above proposal. State your opinion. Give two reasons for it, and explain each reason. Write only the body of the letter.

Your answer will be rated on the following:

Statement of your opinion
Your two reasons and the explanation of each
Your overall plan
Your paragraphing
Your sentence structure, spelling, punctuation,
capitalization, and usage

The rating of a student's answer is to be based upon the criteria below with chief emphasis to be placed upon the following:

Content

The student's opinion about the issue is stated. The reasons for this opinion are given and are explained adequately.

Organization and Development

The student's answer is developed accordingly to an overall plan or pattern. The individual paragraphs are well-developed and knowledge of when to paragraph is demonstrated. Transitions between sentences and paragraphs are suggested.

Mechanics

In addition, emphasis is to be placed upon the mechanics of writing which include observance of rules for sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage.

The samples will be rated according to the following four categories:

Excellent	<u>Content</u> --excellent; opinion stated, reasons given and fully explained <u>Organization and Development</u> --excellent; plan evident and well executed, knowledge of paragraphing demonstrated, transitions used <u>Mechanics</u> --excellent; no errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization or usage
Very Good	<u>Content</u> --very good; opinion stated, reasons given and explained <u>Organization and Development</u> --very good; plan well executed, knowledge of paragraphing demonstrated, transitions used <u>Mechanics</u> --very good; several basic words misspelled, a few errors in punctuation
Minimally Acceptable	<u>Content</u> --weak; opinion stated, reasons given but not fully explained <u>Organization and Development</u> --weak; plan evident, paragraphing not well developed, transitions lacking <u>Mechanics</u> --very good; some basic words misspelled, error in usage
Very Poor	<u>Content</u> --poor; opinion stated but presentation of ideas incoherent <u>Organization and Development</u> --poor; plan not evident, knowledge of paragraphing lacking <u>Mechanics</u> --poor; run-on and incomplete sentences, many basic words misspelled, many basic rules in punctuation, capitalization and usage not observed

Ohio Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Ohio Department of Education administered an English composition assessment to eighth graders in 1977 and an English composition assessment to twelfth graders in 1978. Both tests consisted of a combination of essay items and multiple-choice items.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

In the eighth grade test there were three essay items measuring three objectives. The three objectives were:

The student will be able to demonstrate an ability to write . . .

1. to reveal personal feelings and ideas through free expression.
2. to communicate adequately in a social situation.
3. to communicate adequately in a business situation.

The item used to assess the second objective was:

Imagine the Parent's Club of your school is sponsoring a Friday evening dance for the eighth grade. The dance hours are from 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. Many students feel this is not long enough. Pretend you are Pat Smith and write a letter to the Parent's Club stating your point of view. Explain why you AGREE or DISAGREE with the idea of a dance from 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. Remember to take only ONE point of view. Space is provided below and on the next page.

All of the eighth grade essay items were scored according to primary-trait methodology and for mechanical errors, and some were also scored for secondary traits. The item shown above was not scored for secondary traits, but was scored for mechanical errors and the primary trait of degree of persuasion. Mechanical errors were reported as number of errors per 100 words for each of these categories: (1) spelling, (2) capitalization, (3) punctuation, (4) grammar, and (5) illegible words. Primary-trait scoring results were reported as percent of students within each of the following categories: (1) does not take clear position, (2) takes a position and gives one unelaborated reason, (3) presents arguments and supports them, and (4) misunderstands task.

In the twelfth grade test there were two items measuring two objectives. The two objectives were:

The student will be able to demonstrate an ability to:

1. plan, write and edit a communication adequately.
2. write to communicate adequately in a business situation.

The item used to assess the first objective was:

When Mrs. Smith's garage sale ended, there were still some items left: clothing, china, crystal, toys, and the like--amounting to a total of \$100 according to the prices listed on the tags. She wants Mr. Dealer to take this entire stock for \$200, a price which includes the five old tables on which she had displayed her goods. Mr. Dealer, who buys and sells antiques, immediately accepts. He has recognized that three of the five tables are valuable antiques, each of which he can easily sell for at least \$300.

Should Mr. Dealer tell Mrs. Smith what the value of the tables is? Or is he simply being a good businessman?

Your essay is to defend or attack Mr. Dealer's behavior in this transaction. Your essay will be evaluated on how thoroughly you explore this ethical problem as well as on the organization and compositional skill your paper shows. Space is provided on the next two pages.

In this essay, the primary trait assessed is the student's ability to take a position with regard to the ethical issue portrayed and to array his/her arguments in support of that position. The five criteria used for assessing the primary trait were:

1. No response; irrelevant response; fragment; illegible; any reason given for refusing to write a response.
2. Does not take a clear position, or takes position but gives no reason.
3. Takes a position and gives one or two unelaborated reasons.
4. Takes a position and gives one elaborated reason, one elaborated reason plus one unelaborated reason, or three or more unelaborated reasons.
5. Takes a position and gives two or more elaborated reasons or one elaborated plus two or more unelaborated reasons.

The organization of the essays and the students' compositional skills were scored holistically using a 1-3 scale.

Oregon Writing Assessment

Introduction

In 1978 Oregon conducted an assessment of writing in grades 4, 7, and 11. The test instruments included multiple-choice and writing exercise items developed by several sources. Over 20,000 writing exercises were scored and results returned to students.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

The following are examples of items used by the Oregon assessment program. The writing exercises were scored holistically using a scale of 1-4.

Fourth grade students were asked to respond to the following item:

Write a paragraph which explains how to do one of the following things. Explain what you would do from beginning to end. Write at least four sentences.

Washing a dog
Making a sandwich
Throwing a frisbee
Teaching a dog tricks

Seventh grade students were asked to respond to two items. One of the items was:

Write a friendly letter to a "pen pal" in another country, telling about your preparations for some holiday. Your letter should be as "newsy" as possible because your friend probably does not know how you do things where you live. You have 15 minutes to complete this assignment.

Eleventh grade students were asked to respond to four items. (Item 3 asked for a revision of Item 2.) One of the eleventh grade items was:

Write about an object (not a person, animal or event) to which you are especially attached. Choose something which has deep personal meaning to you and which has been a part of your life. You may want to describe the object. You may want to consider the way you discovered it, the way it came into your life, or the way it has taken on meaning through time.

You have 20 minutes to complete this assignment. Use the pages provided in this booklet for your essay. (3 pages provided)

Assessment Through Use of Multiple-Choice Items

In the grade 4 and grade 7 test instruments, several multiple-choice items were included to assess: (1) writing conventions, (2) grammar, and (3) organization. The multiple-choice items were machine-scored.

An example of a fourth grade item measuring understanding of writing conventions is:

Read each sentence. On your answer sheet mark the number of the sentence with the correct capital letters.

1. have Wendy and Joan gone to the circus?
2. Have wendy and Joan gone to the circus?
3. have Wendy and joan gone to the circus?
4. Have Wendy and Joan gone to the circus?
5. I don't know.

An example of a seventh grade item measuring understanding of grammar is:

Which of the choices below is a fragment?

1. Unt'l they lost three straight games.
2. I promised to go to the movies with Elaine.
3. The following day we all went on a picnic.
4. Please pass out a copy to each student.
5. I don't know.

An example of a seventh grade item measuring understanding of organization is:

As you read the numbered sentences in the scrambled paragraph below, decide in which order the sentences should be arranged to make the best paragraph. On your answer sheet mark the best order of events.

(A) Pat is interviewed on a television talk show about her marvelous invention. (B) On the show she confesses that it is the twin, not she, who has been doing the talking. (C) She imagines that she has invented an identical twin who makes her life easier. (D) As the T.V. audience roars its approval, Pat wakes up--back in class. (E) Pat Brown is sitting in class when she begins to day-dream.

1. A, B, C, D, E
2. E, C, A, B, D
3. B, D, E, A, C
4. E, D, B, C, A
5. I don't know.

Pennsylvania Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) inventory was initiated in 1969, and it has been developing and expanding through the present time to include additional goal areas. The EQA currently contains measures of ten goal areas: (1) Self-Esteem, (2) Understanding Others, (3) Basic Skills (including Reading Comprehension, Writing Skills, and Mathematics), (4) Interest in School and Learning, (5) Societal Responsibility and Knowledge of Law and Government, (6) Health, (7) Creative Activities, (8) Career Awareness, (9) Appreciating Human Accomplishments and Knowledge of Human Accomplishments, and (10) Information Usage. The writing skills section of the basic skills goal area, developed in 1978, will be the focus of this summary.

Writing Assessment Through Use of Multiple-Choice Items

The EQA writing skills instruments consist of multiple-choice items designed to assess skills deemed necessary to produce coherent written material. Writing skills tests were administered in 1978 to approximately 30,000 students at each of three grade levels--5th, 8th, and 11th. There were three forms of the fifth-grade test, four forms of the eighth-grade test, and four forms of the eleventh-grade test. These forms, comprised of 15 items each for the writing skills test, are administered in a multiple matrix sampling context such that an approximately equal number of students in a building receive each form. The school building is the reporting unit. Therefore, approximately 7,500 eighth and eleventh graders responded to each of four forms and about 10,000 fifth graders to each of three forms.

Grade 5: Writing Skills Assessment

The fifth grade writing skills assessment measured approximately 10 different skill areas* such as punctuation, use of regular and irregular verbs, transforming sentences with no change in meaning, choosing appropriate language for a given purpose, choosing opening or topic sentences, etc.

The following is an example of a fifth-grade item:

Choose the best way of writing the sentence or part of the sentence underlined.

Let me tell you about my family. My brother is nine years old, is named Jim, and is younger than I am.

- A My brother is nine years old, is named Jim, and is younger than I am.
- B My brother is nine years old. He is named Jim. He is younger than I am.
- C My younger nine year old brother's name is Jim.
- D I have a younger brother, Jim, who is nine years old.

*Most of the skill areas assessed were common to all three grade levels.

Grade 8: Writing Skills Assessment

The eighth grade writing skills assessment measured approximately 20 different skill areas such as placing modifiers, paraphrasing sentences, determining relevance of ideas to an essay, choosing appropriate language for a given purpose, making a transition to a new paragraph, etc.

The following is an example of an eighth grade item:

Choose the best order of the sentences to write about a storm one night.

- (1) Rain, scooped by the violent wind, pelted against my bedroom window.
- (2) The wind howled and swept around the corner of our house.
- (3) I lay alone in bed frightened by what was happening outdoors.
- (4) Outside it was a dark and stormy night.

- A 1, 2, 3, 4
B 3, 2, 1, 4
C 4, 2, 1, 3
D 1, 2, 4, 3

Grade 11: Writing Skills Assessment

The eleventh grade writing skills assessment measured approximately 15 different skill areas such as combining sentences with clarity, choosing appropriate language for a given purpose, choosing a sentence to develop a topic, including the critical information for a message, etc.

The following is an example of an eleventh grade item:

Which sentence is the best introduction to a paragraph on Louis Pasteur's discovery of smallpox vaccine?

- A Studies of cowpox led Louis Pastuer to discover a smallpox vaccine which saved millions of lives.
- B Pasteur studied many cases of cowpox, and from these studies he developed a vaccination for smallpox, and so he managed to saved millions of lives.
- C Pasteur, whose name is now famous, discovered the cowpox vaccine, and he managed to save millions of lives with his vaccine.
- D Louis Pasteur saved millions of lives through his discovery of the small-pox vaccine.

Scoring the Tests and Reporting Results

All the forms of the tests were machine-scored, and results were reported in several different formats to schools:

- (1) General Summary--lists each goal area, number of students who were given scores for each goal area, average (mean) of the raw student scores, percentile rank in the state of the school in each goal area, and the mean raw score range predicted for the school.
- (2) Percentile Bands by Goals--shows prediction band for school for each goal area.
- (3) Condition Variables--shows information from administrative records, responses from teacher questionnaires, and responses from student questionnaires; some variables considered were such things as discipline problems, percentage of Title I students, parental education, type of community, student time spent watching television, etc.
- (4) Summary of Criterion Referenced Information--for each goal area, shows percent of students answering 5 out of 15 writing skills items correctly (one-third), 8 out of 15 items correctly (one-half), 10 out of 15 items correctly (two-thirds).
- (5) Item Frequency Analysis--lists percent response for each option.

Rhode Island Writing Assessment

The Rhode Island Statewide Assessment Program currently administers a limited number of writing items to eleventh grade students as part of its objective-referenced testing, and scores are reported in terms of average percentage of items correctly completed.

The writing items and scoring criteria were developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education through contract with National Evaluation Systems of Amherst, Massachusetts. The types of writing items include completing a resume, expressing personal ideas and values, and generating written criteria to judge a work of art. The annual testing usually includes one writing item. Due to test security and copyright restraints, actual items cannot be reproduced in this summary.

Texas Writing Assessment

Introduction

In April and May of 1978, the Texas Assessment Project assessed the writing performance of a representative sample of students at ages 9, 13, and 17. The writing tests were designed by NAEP to measure (1) performance on specific writing tasks, (2) mechanics of written expression, and (3) recognizing appropriate writing and valuing written communication. Actual writing exercises were used to assess the first two areas, and multiple-choice items were used to assess the third area. Every item was read aloud by a standard tape-recorded message to minimize the reading ability effect.

Assessment Through Use of Writing Samples

Students in each age group were asked to respond to two kinds of writing assignments--explanatory or persuasive letters and a descriptive essay. In addition, nine-year-olds were given an exercise in expressive writing. The tests had specific time limitations, and no extra time was allowed for revising or editing. Time was adequate for corrections if students chose to make them.

The specific writing task samples were scored according to the primary-trait scoring methodology which assumes that in each writing task there are certain inherent objectives to be accomplished. Successful papers written in response to a specific exercise will achieve these objectives. These samples were not scored for writing mechanics. Other writing samples were scored for mechanics but not for primary traits.

The following are examples of writing exercises used by the Texas Assessment Project to test the three areas mentioned in paragraph one. Such information as time limitations, primary traits required, scoring criteria used, and methods of reporting data are presented for each example.

1. Performance on Specific Writing Tasks

EXAMPLE A. (NAEP ITEM)

The expressive writing task for 9-year-olds:

Sometimes people write just for the fun of it. This is a chance for you to have some fun writing.

Pretend that you are a pair of tennis shoes. You've done all kinds of things with your owner in all kinds of weather. Now you are being picked up again by your owner. Tell what you, as the tennis shoes, think about what's going to happen to you. Tell how you feel about your owner. Space is provided below and on the next two pages.

The time limit for this exercise was 15 minutes. The primary trait required was inventive elaboration of a role. Responses were scored according to four levels of quality:

Level I: No role established.

Level II: Role established. Slight elaboration of role.
Superficial response.

Level III: Good elaboration of role. Successful performance of task.

Level IV: All the qualities of a Level III paper, but also displays
vivid elaboration of role, sustained character development, careful
selection of details, and few, if any, irrelevant details.

Results for this item were reported as percentages of papers scoring at each of the four levels, and were compared with national percentages (provided by NAEP). Results were also reported as percentages of successful papers for each Education Service Center Region of Texas, and relationships between successful papers and the following variables were shown: (1) family income status, (2) ethnicity, (3) size and type of school district, (4) per pupil expenditure, (5) males and females, and (6) languages spoken in the home.

EXAMPLE B. (NAEP ITEM)

The persuasive writing task for 13-year-olds:

Imagine that your principal asked for suggestions about how to make things better in your school. Write a letter to your principal telling him just ONE thing you think should be changed, how to bring about the change, and how the school will be improved by it. Space is provided below and on the next three pages. Sign your letter "Chris Johnson".

333 West Street
Loden, Ohio 99999
September 5, 1978

Mark Hopkins, Principal
Martin Intermediate School
Loden, Ohio 99999

The time limit for this exercise was 15 minutes. The primary trait required was a systematic, persuasive approach to a problem. Three elements were necessary for successful completion of the task: (1) identification of a problem which should be solved, (2) a proposal of a way to solve the problem or bring about the change, and (3) arguments and evidence to demonstrate that the change will benefit the school. Responses were scored as follows:

Level I: Neither defined nor defended a change.

Level II: Identified a problem and explained either how to solve the problem or how the school would be improved if the problem were solved. Reasoning undeveloped.

Level III: Identified a problem, explained how to solve it, and told how the change would benefit the school. Successfully defined and defended a change.

Level IV: Contained all the elements of a Level III paper, but also systematically defined and defended a change.

Results for Example B were reported in the same manner as the results for Example A.

EXAMPLE C. (NAEP ITEM)

An example of an explanatory writing task for 17-year-olds:

Summer Only
Need two high school
students to work in
large clothing store.
\$85 week, July and
August. Write John
Fried, Box 26078,
New York Times, New
York, New York 10017.

Chris Jones lives at 3600 Larch Street in New York, New York 10004. Chris has finished the junior year at Truman High School and has been looking for a summer job. Chris spotted this advertisement in the New York Times and has decided to apply for the job. Write Chris' letter of application to Mr. Fried.

The time limit for this exercise was 17 minutes. Information considered necessary for an acceptable letter were: (1) level of education of the applicant, (2) description or identification of the specific job sought, and (3) indication of how to contact the applicant. Responses were scored for inclusion of each element individually and for inclusion of all three elements. Inclusion of all three elements indicated successful completion of the writing task.

Results for this item were reported in the same categories as the results for Examples A and B. Instead of reporting scores of papers in four levels of quality, however, the results for Example C were reported as percent of papers providing educational information, percent describing job applied for, percent providing information on how to contact applicant, and percent providing all three essential elements.

2. Performance on Mechanics of Written Expression

Descriptive writing for all three age groups was scored according to accepted standards of correctness in word choice, spelling, capitalization, agreement, and punctuation. In addition, these exercises were scored according to length and kinds of words, sentences, and paragraphs used.

EXAMPLE D. (NAEP ITEM)

Nine-year-olds were presented with a picture and the following paragraph:

Here is a picture of a kangaroo in Australia. Look at the picture for a while. What do you think is happening? Where do you suppose the kangaroo came from? Where do you think he is going? Look how high he jumps! Why do you suppose he is jumping over the fence?

Write a story about what is happening in the picture.

EXAMPLE E. (NAEP ITEM)

Thirteen-year-olds and seventeen-year-olds were presented with the following item:

Everybody knows of something that is worth talking about. Maybe you know about a famous building like the Empire State Building in New York City or something like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Or you might know a lot about the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City or the new sports stadium in Atlanta or St. Louis. Or you might be familiar with something from nature, like Niagara Falls, a gigantic wheat field, a grove of orange trees, or a part of a wide, muddy river like the Mississippi.

There is probably something you can describe. Choose something you know about. It may be something from around where you live, or something you have seen while traveling, or something you have studied in school. Think about it for a while and then write a description of what it looks like so that it could be recognized by someone who has read your description.

Name what you are describing and try to use your best writing.

Because of the expense involved in scoring, these items were administered to samples of students representative of three ethnic groups, males and females, family income status, and languages spoken in the home. The samples were not representative of geographic regions or types of school districts.

Assessment Through Use of Multiple-Choice Items

3. Recognizing Appropriate Writing and Valuing Written Communication

In addition to actual writing performance, students' ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate writing was measured. One exercise was administered to 13-year-olds, and three to 17-year-olds. Since this type of item was considered inappropriate for 9-year-olds, this age group was not tested.

EXAMPLE F. (NAEP ITEM)

Thirteen-year-olds were asked to respond to the following item:

Pat Brown has been asked by his class to invite Mr. Jones to come and speak about safety.

Look at the three invitations below. Fill in the oval beside the invitation which is BEST.

☐ Dear Mr. Jones,

Our school would appreciate your speaking to us about safety at 9:30 a.m. next Tuesday, January 3, at Rayburn School. If you are free at this time, please accept our invitation.

Sincerely,
Pat Brown

- ☐ Dear Mr. Jones,
I'm supposed to find out if you can speak to us
at Rayburn next Tuesday, January 3 at 9:00? Please
accept this.

Sincerely,
Pat Brown

- ☐ Dear Mr. Jones,
Our school would like for you to speak to us about
safety. Is that okay with you? We could have you
on Tuesday of next week, and you could talk in our
auditorium.

Yours truly,
Pat Brown

- ☐ I don't know.

EXAMPLE G. (NAEP ITEM)

An example of an item for 17-year-olds:

- ☐ It is a crime what the town did last week regarding leaves, not
letting us burn them while they are piling up all over our yards
as well as our neighbors.
- ☐ The town has acted hastily and without thought in banning the
burning of leaves. What are we going to do with our leaves now?
The town should supply a collection service.
- ☐ The town has made a most serious mistake in banning the burning
of leaves, having made no provisions for the disposal of said
leaves which are even now accumulating on the lawns of the
residents of this fair town.

- ☐ I don't know.

These items were machine-scored and results were reported as percents of correct responses. Scores were reported in relationship to region, family income status, ethnicity, size and type of school district, per pupil expenditure, males and females, and languages spoken in the home.

In addition to the types of items previously discussed, five short-answer exercises were used to assess students' attitudes toward writing. An example of this type of item follows:

EXAMPLE H. (NAEP ITEM)

All three age groups responded to this item:

How often do you write something down so you won't forget it?

- ☐ Often
☐ Sometimes
☐ Never

The results of these items were reported for each age group for Texas in comparison with national results.

Vermont Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Vermont Basic Competency program is an instructional program designed to provide every pupil in Vermont the opportunity to learn to read, write, listen, speak, compute, and reason. The 1977-78 school year was the first year of the implementation of the program. During that year, 95,486 students were assessed to determine which of the competencies identified by Vermonters as those skills necessary to function in today's society had been mastered. By 1981, mastery of all these competencies will be one requirement for graduation from high school. This summary will only be concerned with those competencies identified for writing.

Administration Of Assessments And Results Of Studies

Eight writing competencies were assessed. The methods used to assess these competencies were determined locally, and the progress of each pupil was noted on a Pupil Progress Record. The Vermont Department of Education carried out two studies using samples of student scores: (1) a Review Study to determine whether or not the data gathered by school districts are reasonably consistent with the findings of another reviewer using the same materials and, as far as possible, the same assessment methods and (2) a Comparability Study to judge the extent to which the approaches used in assessments in various school districts were comparable. Results of the Review Study indicated that 69 percent of the time the review team's assessment was in agreement with the local assessment. Results of the Comparability Study showed that the variations found between the assessment methods and materials used by different districts indicate that caution should be used in regarding this data as scientifically accurate.

Writing Competencies

The eight competencies identified for writing are listed here:

1. The student will write all required material, including signature, legibly in manuscript and cursive.
2. Given a list of words which are commonly misspelled, the student will spell them with 80% accuracy.
3. Given material to copy, the student will do so with no errors or omissions.
4. Given directions to write a message related to his/her own interests and environment, the student will write a message that will be clear to the receiver and will contain no more than two grammatical errors.

5. Given forms such as application blanks and order forms, the student will complete them correctly and neatly with no omission of essential information.
6. Given directions to write a friendly letter, to fold it correctly, and to address the envelope, the student will do so, using correct form and having no more than two grammatical or punctuation errors.
7. Given directions to write a business letter, to fold it and to address the envelope, the student will do so with no errors in form, grammar, or punctuation.
8. Given directions to select a topic of interest or importance to him/her, including personal opinion, to write in complete sentences, to use the dictionary as needed to check spelling, and to proofread carefully, the student will write one page of organized material with a total of no more than five errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

Washington Writing Assessment

Introduction

The Washington Department of Public Instruction administered a writing assessment of a sample of approximately 1600 eighth grade students in November of 1976 and a sample of approximately 1500 eleventh grade students in May of 1977. Both assessments used NAEP objectives and items which (1) were related as much as possible to current curricular trends and emphases in Washington, (2) were to measure significant or worthwhile skills, knowledges, or understandings, (3) were to relate both to out-of-school and in-school applications or requirements, and (4) offered the opportunity to compare Washington's eighth and eleventh grade performance with that of a national and western region sample -- a requirement of legislation. A combination of multiple choice items and actual writing exercises was used at each grade level.

Assessment Through Use Of Writing Samples

The following is an example of a writing exercise for eighth grade students:

Music does different things to different people. Perhaps it makes you have one kind of feeling or another. Perhaps it reminds you of someone or something. Maybe it makes you think of some place or something happening.

Now listen to this piece of music and write about what things this piece of music does to you. Start writing anytime you wish. Space is provided below and on the next three pages. (Recording of a Scott Joplin Rag was played.)

An example of an item for eleventh grade students was:

(Students are presented with a photograph of an elderly woman holding a package of tomatoes.)

Here is a picture of a woman with some tomatoes. Look at the picture for a while and decide what is going on. When you have decided, write a story that tells what is happening in the picture and what is likely to happen next.

Responses to the items requiring writing samples were scored according to categories developed by NAEP. Results were given in comparison to national and western regional scores.

Results were also shown in relation to type of community, sex of student, and age group.

Assessment Through Use Of Multiple-Choice Items

In addition to writing exercises, the assessment included one multiple-choice item at each grade level.

The following is the eighth grade item:

Pat Brown has been asked by his class to invite Mr. Jones to come and speak about safety. Look at the three invitations below. Fill in the oval beside the invitation which is BEST.

Dear Mr. Jones,

- ☐ Our school would appreciate your speaking to us about safety at 9:30 a.m. next Tuesday, January 3, at Rayburn School. If you are free at this time, please accept our invitation.

Sincerely,
Pat Brown

Dear Mr. Jones,

- ☐ I'm supposed to find out if you can speak to us at Rayburn next Tuesday, January 3 at 9:30? Please accept this.

Sincerely,
Pat Brown

Dear Mr. Jones,

- ☐ Our school would like for you to speak to us about safety. Is that okay with you. We could have you on Tuesday of next week, and you could talk in our auditorium.

Yours truly,
Pat Brown

- ☐ I don't know.

The eleventh grade item is presented here:

Below are three pieces of writing that all say essentially the same thing. However, one says it with better usage and greater clarity than the other two. Fill in the oval beside the piece of writing you think would be the MOST appropriate to use in a business letter.

- ☐ Enclosed is my cancelled check (photocopied), it shows I paid the bill last December which you say I didn't and I hope this will satisfy you completely.
- ☐ On February 15 you wrote that my bill for the month of December was unpaid; I am enclosing a photocopy of my cancelled check as proof that I have paid it.
- ☐ In answer to yours of the 15th of February, it behooves me to respectfully submit a photocopy of my check cashed by you, to show that I have paid it.
- ☐ I don't know.

Multiple-choice items were machine-scored, and the results were reported for the same categories (state, region, nation) and in relation to the same variables (type of community, sex of student, and age group) as were the results of the writing exercises.

Insights From State Writing Assessments

As part of the research conducted by the Wisconsin Pupil Assessment Program, a questionnaire was sent to each state which had conducted a writing assessment. The questionnaire's purpose was to gather information related to the scoring of writing samples, since this type of scoring is more unfamiliar than machine scoring. The responses to the questionnaire are summarized below.

1. Who scored the samples?

Some states used the scoring services of private commercial and non-profit test publishers. States which scored their own writing samples used classroom English teachers, department heads, and graduate students with teaching and English backgrounds as scorers.

2. How were the scorers trained? Who trained them?

Most states which scored writing samples held workshops to train scorers. Testing services consultants and other qualified instructors conducted most of these workshops.

3. How many scorers read each sample?

Two states used one scorer per sample, with a second scorer to resolve any questions. Most other states had two scorers per sample, with a third scorer to resolve discrepancies.

4. How were discrepancies in scores resolved?

Almost all states used a third reader, sometimes designated as a "group leader", to resolve discrepancies. In one instance, discrepancies were resolved by the state's English/Language Arts consultant.

5. Were mechanics scored? If so, how were they scored?

Several states counted mechanical errors as part of scoring. Some required mechanical correctness as a minimum competency. Two states scored mechanics as secondary traits.

6. How many writing samples were scored?

Some states, especially those with competency programs, tested all of their students over a period of time. Most states tested a sample of students, ranging from 420 per grade level, to 1500, to 8000.

7. What were the major problems you encountered?

Some of the problems expressed were:

- Arrangements for a place large enough and suitable enough for the scoring
- Coordinating release time for teachers to act as scorers
- Adhering to a rigid time schedule during the scoring session
- Not enough time
- Not enough money
- Finding or designing a variety of writing skills tasks, broadly representative of the content domain which are also fair with respect to different cultural groups
- Concern over low achievement

8. What are your recommendations to others who may be planning a writing assessment?

Some of the recommendations stated were:

- Formulate writing objectives and focus research questions before the assessment.
- Involve the local association of English teachers at the very beginning to establish the goals and parameters of the program.
- Use language arts specialists to advise on content and to react to items prior to pilot testing.
- Clarify traits to be measured.
- Use actual performance on practical writing forms such as messages, letters, forms, etc., instead of the proofreading type of assessment found in most multiple-choice tests.
- Consider the undertaking of mechanics assessment carefully. It is very expensive and not always productive.
- Have clear and concise directions for essay writing items.
- Do a small pilot program to determine the value of re-writes.
- Consider pros and cons of sample vs census testing and random sampling within a school vs intact classes.
- If possible, conduct the assessment in two phases. Use a state level sample in the first phase to determine which areas of writing performance to investigate more closely.
- If you score holistically, identify a chief reader early in the program.
- Have follow-up activities ready as soon as the findings are released.
- Get a number of professional groups or university people interested in making use of writing samples for research or other comparisons.

9. What was the average cost per student for your assessment?

Many states had difficulty determining the costs of their writing assessments because the costs were combined with their total assessment programs. Costs ranged from \$1.20/student, to \$8, to \$13. One state estimated the cost for scoring writing mechanics at \$23/student.

Objectives Measured by Writing Assessments

The states which have conducted writing assessments have attempted to measure many different objectives. These objectives tend to fall into five major categories:

- (1) objectives measuring writing performance in social situations,
- (2) objectives measuring writing performance in business or vocational situations,
- (3) objectives measuring writing performance in scholastic situations,
- (4) objectives measuring performance in the use of writing mechanics,
- (5) objectives measuring ability to appreciate the value of writing.

Some objectives seem to overlap categories, but for the convenience of the reader, they are listed here in only one category--the category deemed most appropriate.

Social Situations

The student will be able to:

1. produce an abbreviated announcement suitable for placement as a classified advertisement in a local newspaper under a specific heading such as Job Wanted, Merchandise For Sale, Automobile For Sale, etc.
2. produce a description of an advertising technique or a specific advertisement commonly used by mass communication media or local merchants and its effect on purchasing.
3. produce a composition which compares and contrasts viewpoints and/or the positive and negative aspects based upon readings, research, or personal experience.
4. describe a traffic accident from a diagram.
5. read a list of criteria that might be used to judge people, and write a clear appraisal of one of the listed criteria as particularly good or particularly bad.
6. write a persuasive letter, identifying a problem, proposing a solution, and demonstrating benefits derived from the solution.
7. give clear, accurate, and complete written directions on how to do or make something.
8. compose a letter describing a pictured event.
9. write a friendly letter.
10. write a message that will be clear to the receiver.

Business or Vocational Situations

The student will be able to:

1. produce a letter of complaint to a manufacturer, and include all necessary portions of such a business letter: heading, inside address, salutation, body, closing and signature.
2. produce a letter requesting employment based on an actual classified advertisement, and include all necessary portions of such a business letter: heading, inside address, salutation, body, closing, and signature.

3. produce a description of the requirements for and benefits of a particular career the student wishes to pursue.
4. complete a resume.
5. write a letter requesting a product presented in an advertisement.
6. write a letter of application for a job presented in a newspaper advertisement.
7. fill out an application blank neatly and correctly.
8. complete a business form neatly and correctly.
9. address an envelope correctly.

Scholastic Situations

The student will be able to:

1. express, in written form, personal ideas and values.
2. write an expressive essay.
3. write descriptive paragraphs.
4. write narrative paragraphs.
5. write expository paragraphs.
6. write a persuasive essay.
7. express, in written form, personal feelings clearly and vividly.
8. use language artfully to move the reader into the imaginary world of the writer.
9. write a report based upon data supplied.
10. describe a favorite object.
11. copy given material, doing so without errors or omissions.
12. write a descriptive essay concerning a given photograph.
13. write a descriptive essay concerning a given tape of a musical selection.

Writing Mechanics

The student will be able to:

1. demonstrate good spelling.
2. convey written information in a manner that is legible to the reader.
3. apply syllabication rules to abbreviate correctly and divide words correctly into syllables in written composition.
4. write with complete sentences.
5. use the elements associated with paragraph construction including a topic sentence supported and developed by other sentences.
6. demonstrate cohesiveness in a multiparagraph composition.
7. appropriately organize materials for the subject, purpose, and audience.
8. apply capitalization rules correctly in written composition.
9. apply punctuation rules correctly in written composition.
10. apply proofreading and editing rules correctly in written composition.

Appreciation of Writing

The student will be able to:

1. discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate writing.

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